

Summer 1986 by Ms.Kitty2008

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Summary: New characters are arriving. Old characters will be returning. Let's stop the bad guys.

1. Valerie

When people pass through Hawkins, Indiana, they think it's an ordinary town full of ordinary people. They couldn't be further from the truth. In this town, the world was close to ending many times, but it was always saved by a group of people, some ordinary, and all because they stood together and faced the evil coming for them head-on. They were heroes. And their story is far from over.

It was the Summer of 1986. Steve Harrington was working an evening shift at Family Video with his close friend Robin. They were like two peas in a pod after having spent over a week the previous Summer fighting with Russians. Robin leaned on the counter, her nose in a book while Steve sat on the counter beside her.

"What do you think of her?" Steve asked, prompting Robin to look up from her pages. He was staring at a girl down the sci-fi aisle, her hair was a medium blonde color, pulled back into a low ponytail. Her bangs were framed her face nicely, with two long pieces on either side. Her skin was very fair, nearly porcelain, and in her hands she was trying to decide between *Weird Science* or *The Terminator*.

"Huh?" Steve looked over at Robin, smiling and seeing if she got her approval.

"If she's turned off by your charm, I will not be surprised," Robin replied, chuckling as Steve's face fell.

"Well, if I don't get her, you're up to bat," Steve told her before hopping off the counter and strolling down the aisle the girl was down. It had been a while since he had even been out with a girl, let alone had a girlfriend. Nancy Wheeler was the last girl he had kissed, and that seemed like a lifetime ago. He pushed back the memories as he closed in on the blonde. As he got closer to her, he noticed that she was a little more filled out than most of the girls he had been interested in, but she was also maybe 5 inches shorter than him. No matter. Thanks to Dustin, he was never going to judge someone again without getting to know them.

"Need help finding anything?" he asked her. She looked up at him, eyeing him carefully.

"I'm just trying to figure out which one I'm in the mood for," she answered.

"Have you seen them?" Steve wanted to try to keep the conversation going, to get a feel for how to flirt with this girl.

"Oh, yeah," she told him, "but I don't which one I'm in the mood for more. I love them both. I finally got it narrowed down to two from five." She smiled at him warmly. Yes, it was working!

"What were the other three you were considering?" he asked her, genuinely curious now.

"Here," she said, walking back down the aisle and pulling three different movies off the shelf. *The NeverEnding Story*, *Clue*, and *Somewhere In Time*.

"These are all great choices," Steve said, smiling. Having worked at the video store for about a year now, he had become a bit of a cinephile. "I have no idea what this is about," he said, holding up *Somewhere In Time*.

"It's a really sweet love story," the girl responded. "One of my favorites." She took the movie from his hands, her fingers gently brushing against his. "Okay, so now I can't decide again," she said with a chuckle. He smiled.

"Uhm, I'm Steve." She looked back up at him, he noticed her eyes were a deep emerald color.

"Valerie," she said, still smiling at him. Steve looked cautiously back at the counter and Robin was just staring. She was surprised that this girl hadn't given him the boot, this was the first in a long time for him right now. He looked back at Valerie, suddenly nervous.

"Would you, uh, I mean, are you doing anything tonight?" he asked her.

"Well, I was just going to hang out in my hotel room, watching a

movie obviously," she held up the now small pile of movies in her hands.

"Hotel room?" he asked.

"Oh, I'm just passing through for a week or two," she told him. "Trying to take it all in before I start having to, y'know, be an adult." He nodded, slightly understanding since he was still trying to figure life out for himself. But now he was slightly worried about getting attached to this girl, who will not be around for too long.

"Oh, okay," he said, still nervous. "Did you maybe, I don't know, want to grab a bite to eat and watch one of those movies with me?" There was a slight awkward pause, and he quickly said, "No pressure. I mean, I don't normally do this, but I saw you and you-you-you're just really pretty and," she smiled, looking down, "I mean, I just," he kept stammering over his words, "I think I'll just go back to work..." He hung his head dejectedly, about to walk away.

"What time do you get off?" she asked, still smiling.

"Ten," he answered, probably too eagerly. She walked up to the counter, him following in her wake, and laid the movies down. As Robin rang her out, she grabbed a pen and a piece of paper from the counter, writing something down and handing it to Steve.

"That's my room number," she told him. "If you want to bring a pizza or something with you, I wouldn't complain." She paid Robin for the movies before turning back to Steve and saying, "I'll see you later, Steve." And with that, she grabbed her movies, turned on her heel, and was out the door before he had time to register it.

"Holy shit, Harrington," Robin said, laughing. "You got a date!" They high-fived in celebration.

"This makes no sense," Steve said for probably the millionth time since she put the movie on. Since he had said that he hadn't seen *Somewhere In Time*, she insisted that be the first movie they watched. She just rolled her eyes at him.

"It would if you would stop complaining," she said with a smile.

"I don't think it would," he retorted.

"Is it you? Is it?" Elise asked on the screen, looking at Christopher Reeves character.

"How is he time traveling?" Steve asked, eliciting a groan from Valerie as her head rolled back against the wall.

On the other side of town, near where the mall had been, something else was going on, a hole was slightly open, a red, reverberating feeling coming from it. A slight screeching noise could be heard.

And the only one who could feel this was Will Byers, who was over 100 miles away.

2. The Mind Flayer

So, I'm hoping to do one chapter a day, but please don't be upset if that doesn't happen. -Cat

About one hundred miles away, Will Byers sat up in bed, rubbing at his neck. He sighed, fully knowing what that meant, but not wanting to believe or deal with it. He was far away from Hawkins now, should he still be able to feel The Mind Flayer? Or was it just that powerful?

He pushed the thin sheet off his body and headed out of his room. Several seconds later, he knocked on the wooden door of his mother's room. He heard some rustling before she opened the door, disheveled and confused. Sleepiness was evident on her face.

"Will, what's wrong?" she asked.

"I can feel him again," he said, fear evident in his face. His mother looked at him and opened her bedroom door further to pull her young son into a hug.

Would this nightmare ever be over for them?

The next morning, at the Wheeler residence, the phone rings. An annoyed and huffy Nancy picks it up from the kitchen.

"Wheeler residence, this is Nancy speaking," she says into the phone.

"Hey," says a voice on the other end. Instantly, a smile spreads across her face.

"Hey," she replies back. "I miss you, Jonathan."

"You may not have to miss me much longer," he told her. "We're coming back for a few days."

"Really?" Nancy asked, getting a little giddy, her smile spreading further across her face.

"It's not just to visit though," Jonathan told her and her smile fell slightly. "It's to make sure everything is okay there. Will says he feels him again."

"When?" Nancy asked.

"Last night," Jonathan answered. "It woke him up."

"Is he sure it wasn't a nightmare or something?"

"Nance," Jonathan sighed.

"I'm sorry, it's just-" she started to say, but he interrupted her.

"I know," he said. "I don't want this to be true either, but he hasn't been wrong yet." There was a slight pause.

"So, when will you be here?" Nancy asked, somewhat changing the subject.

"Sometime tomorrow morning," he told her and she could hear him smiling.

"I can't wait to see you," she told him.

"If you keep staring at me, I'm going to start to get weirded out," Steve said before he looked over at Robin, who was just looking at him expectantly with wide eyes. "What?" he said, laughing. They were both working the evening shift again at Family Video, and she was starting to worry him.

"I wanna know," she told him.

"Know what?" he asked, looking away, fully knowing what she was referring to.

"Your date, Harrington," she said, shooting a glare at him. "I know you know what I meant." He just rolled his eyes.

"We watched a movie and a half before I left," he answered.

"So, let me get this straight," Robin began, "she invites you back to her hotel room, alone, no one, and you guys just watch a movie or two together?"

"A movie and a half," Steve corrected.

"Oh, I'm sorry, a movie and a half, and you don't even get a kiss?" she asked, staring right at Steve. He blinked twice before sighing.

"It's been a while," he responded and Robin immediately began laughing. "Stop laughing, dweeb!"

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry," Robin said, wiping away tears from her laughter. "So, will you see her again?" As if on cue, Valerie was walking past the window with an armful of paper grocery bags. Steve quickly jumped over the counter. "I assume that's a yes!" Robin yelled after him.

"Hey, Valerie," Steve called as soon as he exited the video store. Valerie was already at the edge of the block before turning around, hearing her name called. She immediately smiled when she saw Steve standing there.

"Hey, Steve," she said back to him, walking towards him. "I'm sorry I fell asleep on you last night."

"No, it's fine," he told her.

"It's just, I had been traveling for a few days, and I was really tired and-" she began but he cut her off.

"Seriously, it's perfectly fine," he told her. "I... didn't mind it." He remembered her head falling to the side onto his shoulder last night and thought she looked absolutely adorable. "Actually, I was wondering what you were doing tomorrow for lunch?" He put his hands in his pockets, feeling nervous again.

"Oh," she said, slightly deflating. "I'm actually meeting up with a friend, to look at a place."

"Oh, so you'll be staying in Hawkins a little longer?" he asked, hopeful.

"No," she answered. "It's just a place for him."

Him?

"He's actually more like a crabby uncle rather than a friend when I think about it," she said, chuckling. "But maybe dinner instead?" She sounded hopeful.

"Yes," Steve said. "I'm off tomorrow, so that would work out too." After a pause, he asked, "I'll pick you up around 7?"

"Sounds like a date," she responded. He smiled.

"It's a date then."

3. A Change

I say I'm going to update every day and I failed already. Look at me go. -Cat

The Wheeler's basement used to be the resident hang out spot for the boys when they were playing Dungeons and Dragons. Today, however, it housed a different kind of meeting.

"I don't even know what we're going to do," Joyce said, pacing back and forth. Mike, Will, El, Jonathan, and Nancy watched her going back and forth from wherever they all sat.

"Hopper would know what to do," El said. Joyce stopped pacing and looked at the young teenage girl. There was a moment of silence before Jonathan spoke up.

"We need to get into the mall and just close it," he said.

"What if something is on this side of the gate?" Nancy asked. "What if we can't get past it?"

"We got through it before," he answered. "We can do it again. We don't really have much of a choice."

"I already called Owens, I don't know when or if he's going to show up," Joyce offered, looking at Jonathan. "If they take their sweet time like they did before, we seriously may just take care of this ourselves." She look over at El. "Are you up for this, sweetie?" El nodded. Her powers had been gone for almost six months before they finally came back. They were a little hectic at first, but she started getting her control back over them.

"I'll try," she said.

"Then let's do this," Joyce said, nodding.

"I'll call Steve, Dustin, Lucas, and Max," Mike said. "We'll need all the help we can get."

"So you've been to France?" Steve asked, hands in his pockets as he walked Valerie to the door of her hotel room. She nodded in response.

"And England, Scotland, and Russia," she told him. "Travelling has been a big thing for me in the past few years." She rifled through her purse for her room key. A door down the hall was heard opening and closing, but neither of them glanced down the hallway to see if anyone was coming. They were too engrossed in conversation to check. Finally, she found her key and opened the door.

"I won't lie, I'm a little jealous there," Steve told her, smiling. She returned his smile warmly.

"Did you want to-?" she began but was cut off by her room phone ringing. "Oh, hang on a second," she said, pushing the door open the rest of the way and running over to the phone by her bedside, picking it up, she said, "Hello?"

"He needs to leave," a male voice on the other end said.

"What?" she asked, slightly turning her back from Steve to make an attempt to cut him off from the one-sided conversation he could still probably hear.

"I know him, and he needs to leave," the man said.

"I mean, just give me a second, and-"

"You are putting him and yourself in danger," he told her. "They know him too." Valerie took a deep breath and closed her eyes for a brief second. Opening them back up, there was a total change in her demeanor.

"Okay," she said and hung up the phone. Turning back to Steve, who stood in the doorway, he could tell there was a difference in her.

"Is everything okay?" he asked her, concerned.

"Yeah," she answered. "It's just, I'm not feeling well suddenly, so I'm sorry, but I'm going to have to cut tonight short." Confused, Steve nodded.

"Oh," he began, "well, uhm, if you wanted to hang out another time, that would be cool."

"Maybe," she told him. "It all depends." There was a pause. "I'm not staying in town anyway." He just nodded.

"Alright," he said. "I'll see ya." She walked towards him to close the door behind him. He looked back at her as he stood in the hallway.

"I'm sorry," she said, not knowing that would be the first of many apologies she would end up saying to him.

"So, we came up with rules so these kinds of things wouldn't happen." Valerie just rolled her eyes, sighing, as she sat at the bottom of her bed.

"I didn't know you knew him, Hopper," Valerie said.

Hopper paced the floor of her room right by her bed. Hopper, who was supposed to be dead. Hopper, who was very much alive, and very much back in town.

"I know everyone in this town," he told her, stopping suddenly and looking right at her. She met his gaze.

"You know I meant I didn't know he was involved in all of this," she said, waving her hand slightly. "I didn't know."

"You know why we're here," Hopper told her.

"Yes," she said, feigning excitement. "We're bringing you back from the dead, shutting down the portal, **for good**, and making sure Hawkins and the rest of the world is a safe place again."

"You don't need to be sarcastic," he responded. She stood up from the bed, still dressed from her date with Steve.

"And you don't need to remind me of our job here," she told him shortly. "I could have left you to die, Hop. I didn't. I could have ditched you at the first sign of trouble. I didn't. I'm here of my own free will, and you need to not forget that." She turned away from

him, pulling her thin sweater off over her head and throwing it on the bed before pulling her shoes and socks off.

"You're also here for closure," Hopper said softly. She stood in place for a few seconds after he said that, and when she finally turned to face him, she was clearly upset.

"Don't..."

"You need to know that he can't hurt you anymore," he continued, "and he can't." He took two steps towards her. "You're free, Val." Valerie took a shaky breath, rubbing her hand over her face to calm herself. Hopper looked at her inner forearm as she did so. Her arm fell to her side, but it was still slightly visible there.

The numbers 001 was permanently etched into her skin.

4. Holding Out For A Hero

This chapter is brought to you by "Holding Out for a Hero" by Bonnie Tyler. I seriously came up with this one from listening to it. I don't know why or how, but it happened lol - Cat

The mall had been abandoned since it caught fire last year. No one had dared enter, with rumors of people disappearing floating through the town, but of course, they had never been confirmed. For the group of individuals making their way through the broken down mall, they would not have been surprised if these rumors were true.

Joyce and Jonathan were leading the group in, their flashlights flickering through the air dimly. Jonathan had a loaded gun in his one hand. They were followed closely by El, who had her hands attached to Mike's arm, with Lucas, Max, Will, and Dustin with them. Nancy and Steve brought up the rear, Steve with his famous bat, and Nancy with another flashlight. They were as prepared as they were going to get with these creatures, if there were any there.

Slowly, carefully, they found the hallway that would lead them down into the depths of the mall, where the Russians had hidden their actions. They were walking for maybe about ten minutes before they heard it - the screeching, the growling, the snarling - and all of them were fearful. They knew what these things could do. At the end of the hallway, a Demogorgon appeared, walking slowly, seemingly surveying the group before it.

"El," Jonathan said softly. The young teenager stepped forward. Recognition sparked and the creature laid down and ran at them, full speed. Using her powers, El stopped it, but not fully. It was fighting against her power and it seemed to be winning.

"Oh no," Max breathed out. This had been happening, El was not in full control of her powers since she was just getting them back. The Demogorgon screeched loudly and finally, El strained harder and she was able to tear it's head off. It fell, dead at their feet. El breathed a little heavily before falling back, Jonathan catching her, and she was out like a light. Suddenly, there was more screeching and they could

see another Demogorgon coming around the corner.

"Run," Joyce commanded. Jonathan picked El up in his arms and they ran out of the hallway as fast as they could. Coming through the door at the end of the hallway, Steve and Mike slammed it hard and looked for something to seal it with, deciding on a nearby bench. Would it last? No. But it was something to buy them some time. The group turned a corner and Joyce's body slammed into someone else's. The person caught her before she could fall back and she looked up, right into Jim Hopper's eyes.

"Hop," she said. They all looked shocked to see Hawkins old Sheriff alive and seemingly well. "You're alive," she breathed out.

"What are you guys doing here?" he asked, practically ignoring her statement.

"You're alive?!" she said angrily, smacking his chest. Before her outburst could continue, there was another screech.

"How many?" Hopper asked.

"We only saw one right now," Jonathan answered. "El killed another one," he said referring to the girl in his arms.

"What happened?" There was concern etched on Hopper's face. Another screech came. "Never mind, we'll talk later, let's move." They started walking towards the exit as fast as possible, Hopper pulling out a walkie. "Wait for my signal," he said into it. There was no response though. Only static.

Before they could make it to the exit, two Demodogs stood in front of them. They backed up slightly, but before anyone could do anything, the Demogorgon from the hallway was behind them, screeching. Quickly, they scattered. Steve slammed his bat into the head of a Demodog before it could snap at Dustin, Joyce had grabbed the gun from Jonathan, shooting the Demogorgon, but only angering it. It happened in a second, but time felt like it had slowed when it did. Will was hit by a Demogorgon's limb and he was knocked across the floor, then another Demogorgon came out of the shadows near him. He attempted to back up, but he knew it would do no good. He was

done for.

"Will!" Joyce screamed, about to run forward, Hopper stopping her.

"Don't," Hopper warned, then he grabbed his walkie. "Now," he said into it. But, nothing happened. The Demogorgon still advancing and panic rising, Hopper yelled into the walkie again, "Now, goddamit!" Still, nothing.

"No!" Joyce screamed as the Demogorgon's mouth opened, about to swallow her son before suddenly, it was thrown back against the wall. It fell to the floor, landing on its feet. Its mouth opened again and it slowly started walking back towards Will. But now, someone else was in its path. Steve couldn't believe his eyes. Valerie stood before them, in jeans and a short-sleeved white shirt. She waved her left hand behind her and Will slid across the floor towards his mother's open arms.

The Demogorgon in front of her opened its mouth and screeched again. The two Demodogs came from either side of her, both jumping at her at the same time. She put both her hands up to either side of her, effectively stopping them mid-air before slashing their heads off. Steve looked around, realizing the other Demogorgon had disappeared, but knowing that it had to be around somewhere. And they knew that Valerie was a threat, just like El was. He stood up quickly, bat at the ready, searching the vicinity for it while Valerie faced off with the Demogorgon in front of her.

She shoved it against the wall and it screeched at her slightly, the sides of the wall slowly caving in as she put more pressure on it. That's when Steve saw it, the second one coming at her and she had no idea. He ran for it, swinging the bat, starting low and moving up, smashing its head. Valerie, caught off guard, turned and saw Steve right behind her with the other creature. Quickly, she used her powers to shove the creature away and shared a look with Steve.

"Duck," he quickly said and she did as he told as his bat smashed against the ribs of the Demogorgon she originally had pinned against the wall. She saw the second one coming back. Quickly, she shoved Steve back with her powers and he hit the floor hard. She felt bad for it, but she stood up fast and literally ripped the Demogorgon he had

just hit in half before turning and doing the same with the one that was charging her. She took a deep, shaky breath, feeling blood trickle out of her nose. She looked at Steve, who just stared at her, before looking over to Hopper.

They were going to have a lot of explaining to do.

5. She Saved You

I'm actually updating at a pretty good speed here. Hopefully, it'll last lol - Cat

They arrived at the hotel both Hopper and Valerie were staying at, uncomfortable silence the whole way there. As they all entered Valerie's hotel room, she was the first to break the silence.

"Lay her down on the bed," she said, throwing her room key onto the table. She pulled her jacket off as Jonathan laid El down onto the bed gently. Valerie knelt on the other side of the bed, leaning over El, her hand gently touching the younger girl's head, the tattoo on her arm more evident than ever.

"You're like El," Dustin was the first to point it out. Valerie looked up at him before leaning back, placing her hands on her folded knees.

"I guess," Valerie responded. She looked around the room, suddenly uncomfortable with all the eyes on her. Thankfully, the feeling didn't last long because Joyce Byers was a very pissed off woman. She quickly turned to Hopper, who was right next to her.

"You were alive this whole time?" she asked him, her fingers stabbing hard into his chest.

"Joyce," he started, but she was having none of it.

"Don't you 'Joyce' me!" she told him. *"I mourned you. El mourned you."* Then a short pause, tears appearing in her eyes slightly. *"We mourned you, Hop. And you were alive."*

"I didn't have a choice," he tried explaining. He looked over to Valerie for help. "Val, please?"

"I'm quite enjoying this actually," Valerie offered with a small smile tugging at her lips. Hopper groaned.

"And you," Joyce turned to Valerie now.

"Oh, crap," Valerie muttered, climbing off the bed.

"Who the hell are you?!" Joyce demanded. "Where the hell did you even come from?!"

"No longer enjoying this," Valerie said before moving across the room, touching Joyce's forehead with two fingers before the woman froze in place, a blank expression coming over it.

"What are you doing to my mom?" Will asked angrily, he stepped forward to attempt to stop Valerie but Hopper put his hand up.

"She's explaining," he answered.

Joyce was standing in what appeared to be a prison cell, confusion etched all over her features. She looked around the room, there were no windows that she saw, only a door. As she looked around, she did a double-take. Sitting on a cot against the far wall was Hopper. He looked like he had been beaten to hell and back. She walked towards him.

"Hop?" she said quietly. Outside this memory, in the present, in reality, Joyce said it out loud too. Soon, she heard shouting coming from outside the door. She turned fast, just in time to see the door blow apart and in walked Valerie. Her hair was shorter though, to her shoulders. She walked into the room slowly, her nose bleeding.

"You must be the American," Valerie said. "I'm Val, I'll be your Knight in shining armor this evening." The scene around Joyce faded and blurred slightly before a new one popped up in front of her. This time, it looked like some time had passed since Valerie's hair was longer now, almost to the length it was now. They were sitting in a car, parked outside a gas station. Hopper in the driver seat, Valerie in the passenger seat.

"Are you sure going back is a good idea?" she asked him. His hands were holding onto the steering wheel, his knuckles white.

"If what you're saying is true, then the portal that was opened in Hawkins is the only one to shut them all down," he looked over at

her. "It needs to be stopped."

"I don't know," she said, looking down at her hands.

"Either you're with me or you stay here, Val," he told her. She looked back up at him. "There is no in-between here." He paused, removing his hands from the steering wheel and facing her slightly. "Look, I want my life back. And I know you have to be sick of being a nomad. You can't run forever." She looked away from him again, clearly thinking it over. After a moment of silence, she turned back to look at him again.

"I help you close the portal, we bring you back from the dead, and then I'll make my decision on whether to stay put or not," she told him.

"Deal," he said, putting one hand back on the wheel and starting the car up for the drive.

Back in the hotel room, Valerie's nose was bleeding again. She looked over at Hopper before removing her fingers from Joyce's forehead. Joyce, shocked from being pulled back to reality so roughly and also by what she just witnessed, fell back slightly, leaning onto Hopper for some support. Valerie wiped at her nose, though it had already leaked onto her white shirt. Joyce looked over her shoulder at Hopper.

"She saved you," Joyce said plainly.

"She did," Hopper confirmed. "See, I would have come back sooner but I was sort of a Russian prisoner." Before anyone could say anything else, he looked up at Valerie. "Wake her up, please," he asked her. Valerie didn't say a word. She walked over to the bed that El was laying on. She refused to look at Steve, she could feel his stare. Sitting on the edge of the bed now, Valerie pushed back some of El's stray hairs back before placing her hand on her cheek. She closed her eyes briefly. A second later, El gasped, eyes wide and she sat up quick. Her eyes found Hopper's fast, tears swam in her vision.

"Hey, kid," he said by way of greeting. She jumped off the bed, crying

hard, and landed in his outstretched arms. There was so much love in their embrace, it made Valerie smile slightly. But, her nose was bleeding again, this time harder. She touched her hand to her face, trying to staunch it slightly. Nancy was the only one to notice Valerie's stance wobbling when she stood up, her vision slightly swimming. Everyone else was focused on El's sobs and Hopper's whispering to her that everything was okay now.

"Valerie, are you okay?" she heard Nancy ask before the world went black.

6. Five Years Gone

I guess I'm just in a writing mood - Cat

Valerie woke a few hours later, head pounding. She groaned and turned over, wanting to know what time it was.

"Don't push yourself too hard," Hopper's voice said in the dimly lit room.

"Hop," she said, voice scratchy.

"Hand me that water," he told someone. She turned slightly to see Steve handing Hopper a glass of water. Hopper helped her sit up and he handed her the glass. She started chugging it, thankful for every last drop. She pulled the glass away from her lips, it was still half full, and she took a deep breath.

"Where is everyone?" Valerie asked as Hopper leaned over to the table, opening the drawer and pulling out a prescription bottle.

"Joyce, Will, and El are in my room for right now, and Jonathan took the others home," Hopper answered, opening the pill bottle and getting two pills out, handing them to Valerie. She took them fast, taking a few more sips of water. Steve leaned against the dresser, next to the tv on it, arms crossed, just listening and watching their interactions. He was still finding this whole situation hard to believe, but after all that he'd seen, he didn't know how at this point.

"You could have told me no, you know," Hopper said, after a slight pause.

"I know," she told him, setting the glass on the nightstand. "But I did what needed done here so..."

"And you completely drained yourself in the process," Hopper told her as she rolled off the other side of the bed. She stood shakily. "Valerie," he said her name in a scolding tone.

"Listen, Hop," she turned, briefly looking at Steve before looking right

at Hopper. "We have a job we need to get done. Now, I just want to get a shower, clean the gross shit off of me from today, and try again tomorrow."

"You need to rest," Hopper told her, standing up. "It can wait a day." He looked over at Steve, who honestly felt more awkward than anything in this room with them. They had gained some kind of father/daughter bond over the time they spent together, that was clear to see. He then looked back at Valerie. "Listen, you get a shower, you do what you need to do, I'm going to try and spend some time with El." He looked back at Steve again. "Besides, I think you two need to talk anyway."

Valerie's hair was wet from her shower, but she felt so much better then she had when she woke up. She dressed in her pajamas, a pair of sweatpants and a baggy *Queen* shirt. She looked at herself in the mirror as she pulled her hair back into a loose, wet bun. Her skin was still pretty pale from her passing out earlier, and as much as she didn't want to admit it - Hopper was right. She needed to rest. She looked over at the closed door, not knowing what she could tell Steve, and also not wanting to talk about this. She sighed and opened the door, ready as much as she could be.

Steve Harrington sat at the foot of her bed, the tv on. He was watching *The NeverEnding Story* and Valerie smiled. He seemed so carefree at the video store that she didn't even think he could have been involved. Is he just that good at blocking all the bullshit out? Whether he heard her come out of the bathroom or not had yet to be established, but he did look at her when she sat down next to him at the end of the bed.

"So," he began and already, she dreaded whatever question he was going to ask, "are you hungry?" She paused, completely caught off guard.

"What?" she asked, laughing slightly.

"I mean, I already ordered a pizza, because I was hungry," he explained, "but I wasn't sure about you." Now that she thought about it, she was starving.

"It's appreciated," she told him. He looked down at his hands before looking back up at her.

"Are you from the lab too?" he asked her. Her fingers started running absentmindedly over the tattoo.

"Yes," she answered.

"How long have you been out of there?" She had to think...

She was fifteen when she got out. It had been five years. They had started sedating her, to keep her under control since she was growing stronger by the day, but even that didn't work. She was able to kill the nurse that came in to care for her. She had broken his neck. And then she ran, killing anyone in her path.

She looked back at Steve, tears shining in her eyes. Should she tell him what she had done? That she was a killer?

"About five years," she answered.

"I'm sorry," he began, "if I'm crossing a line here, please just tell me."

"It's okay," she told him, looking away. "It's just..." She sighed. "I just want to pretend, okay?" She looked back at him before continuing, "I just want to not feel like a freak for a little while." He leaned close to her, and brushed a tear off her cheek with his thumb.

"You're not a freak," he said sincerely, his hand still resting on her cheek. Yes, he wanted to kiss her, bad. But, he didn't want to take advantage of her being an emotional wreck. Thankfully, he was saved by a knock on the door. He moved his hand away quickly, but Valerie could still feel the warmth of it on her cheek. "Food's here," he said, standing up and pulling his wallet out. Valerie took the moment Steve was distracted to close her eyes for a second and steeling herself, in an attempt to regain her composure.

Later, she fell asleep on Steve's chest, just listening to his heartbeat, and it was the best rest she had gotten in a long time.

7. Ice Cream

Hellooooo beautiful people. Please enjoy :) -Cat

Valerie was in the void, a hospital gown in place of her pajamas. She went to run her hand through her hair to discover it was all gone.

"Wha... No," she said, grasping at air.

"Did you really think we'd let you keep your hair long?" a familiar voice asked her coolly. She turned slowly and came face to face with Dr. Brenner. She stared at him, ready to cry or flee, whichever came to her first. "Do you really think you could get away from me, One?" He reached out for her and she tripped back over her feet, landing hard onto the ground.

Valerie sat up in bed, breathing deeply, feeling like the wind had been knocked out of her. She touched her head to make sure her hair was still there. She sighed in relief when she felt it through her fingertips. When she was in the lab, she had no control over her body at all, so of course, as soon as she was free, she wanted to grow out her hair.

She turned slightly to see that Steve was still fast asleep next to her on the bed. She could feel tears welling up in her eyes from the nightmare she had just had, so she quietly got off the bed and went to the bathroom with a change of clothes. She cried quietly as she changed and started to get ready for whatever the day would hold.

In the room, Steve woke up, and groggily rubbed his hands over his face, realizing he was alone. He sat up really quickly, suddenly worried. *Where was Valerie?* Just then, he heard the sink in the bathroom running and he wanted to smack himself for even worrying in the first place. A moment later, she came out of the bathroom and saw that Steve had a hold of his jacket.

"Are you leaving?" she asked him.

"Yeah," he answered, "I've got work in a couple hours." He paused for

a second before saying, "Did you maybe want to go out again tonight?" She smiled slightly. "Because no matter what you try to say about yourself, I really do like you, and enjoy just being around you."

"What time are you done at work?" she asked him. He returned her smile.

"Eight," he answered. "I can go home, change real quick and be here literally 30 minutes after that."

"I'll see you then, Steve," she told him.

For the past several months, El has been trying to regain full control of her powers and the reign they have over her body. That was what the agenda was for today, Valerie was going to do her best to help this young woman out. Together, they sat in Hopper's hotel room, since he had run out to get them some food.

"You need to remember that your powers are fully tied to your emotions," Valerie told El, which is something she had constantly heard before but never fully understood it.

"I know, but how do I get control over my... emotions?" El asked. Valerie snorted.

"You don't," she told her. "You just get good at masking them." After a pause, she said, "Look, my intentions yesterday was to protect all of you guys. That's all I could focus on, making sure everyone got out safely. I was so exhausted after going up against those things. Then I had to show Joyce some memories and wake you up. It drained the hell outta me." She leaned towards El. "I know my limitations. But I know I went past them hard yesterday and my body suffered the consequences for it. Maybe until you get your limits set, you should take it easy for a bit."

"Maybe," El said, thinking about it. "But what about the portal?" Valerie waved her hand.

"If I have to take care of it myself, it's no big deal," she answered. "I wouldn't mind the help though so maybe try to get some practice in

that won't make you pass out?" El rolled her eyes, before asking a question that had been burning inside of her.

"How did you escape?" El asked, curiosity written in her eyes. Valerie swallowed before answering.

"I killed almost half the staff at the Lab at the time," she said. "I think you were there that night." Valerie put her two fingers up towards El's forehead, pressing, and she watched as El's face went blank.

El stood in a white room, with a white chair, a white table, and a white bed. And in the white bed, covered in white sheets was a younger version of Valerie, her hair all gone. Her eyes were open but they were glazed over.

"What's wrong with you?" El asked out loud, but Valerie could hear her in the hotel room and answered the question.

"I'm drugged up," she said. Soon, the door opened and in walked Dr. Brenner with another nurse.

"How are her vitals today?" Dr. Brenner asked.

"Lower than before," the nurse answered. "If it keeps going this low, she may die, Doctor." Brenner put his hands on Valerie's face and she stared back at him blankly.

"Keep her sedated," Dr. Brenner told the Nurse, still looking at Valerie.

"Yes, Doctor," the nurse responded. Dr. Brenner turned and left the room. The Nurse went over to the table to prepare the sedative that he was to give Valerie. As he did so, Valerie's eyes sluggishly turned over to look at him, the wheels in her head moving slightly. The Nurse came back over to her bed, setting the sedative down on the side as he tilted her head more to the left, preparing the area he was going to give the shot to with an alcohol pad. And that was the opening she was waiting for. She turned her head slightly to look up at the Nurse and her eyes weren't as glossed over anymore. The Nurse's eyes widened and it happened in seconds. Valerie turned her

head fast and the Nurse's neck snapped. He fell to the floor, dead, and she grabbed the sedative, slid out of the bed carefully and walked very wobbly towards the door. Just then, the room blurred and shifted.

El found herself back in the hotel room with Valerie. She was about to ask why she stopped when she heard the door open and Hopper walked in. Valerie wiped the blood from her face.

"I hope you guys are hungry," Hopper said with a smile. He pulled boxes out of a bag, and with a flourish, opened the first one to reveal... waffles. El smiled and laughed.

"Wait, you're telling me you used yourself *as bait* against a Demodog, or whatever?" Valerie asked Steve as they sat outside an ice cream shop. She had a regular old chocolate shake while Steve had opted to get a small strawberry cone with sprinkles on it.

"Yes," he answered. "Yes, I did."

"So, did you want to die or something?" He rolled his eyes at her question.

"I was hoping you would find that brave," he told her.

"You'd be surprised how much bravery and stupidity can be put together," she responded.

"Ouch," he said, putting his hand on his chest. "That hurt, Val."

"I'm sure you'll get over it," she said with a smile. They finished up their frozen treats before heading back to the hotel. Since it wasn't that far, they had decided to walk back.

"So how did they get the names Demodogs and Demogorgon?" Valerie asked.

"Something with Dungeons and Dragons," Steve answered. "The boys are the ones that came up with it."

"Dungeons and Dragons?" Valerie drew her eyebrows up in confusion, stopping to look at Steve. "What the hell is that?"

"A game of some kind," Steve answered. "I never really got into it." He looked down at her, hands on his hips before saying, "You know, you keep asking all these questions, and I haven't even gotten to ask one." She looked down at her hands for a second before meeting his eyes again.

"Go ahead, ask anything," she told him, preparing herself for anything.

He thought for a second before looking at her and saying, "What's your favorite color?" She burst out laughing.

"Of all the things you could ask?" She was still laughing about it.

"Hey, it's a good question," he said, defending it. Her laughter died down, but the smile was still on her face.

"Orange," she answered.

"Why?" he asked.

"Because of the sunrise and sunset," she answered. "I love the way the horizon becomes this beautiful shade of orange." She was still smiling, her eyes lighting up, and he just couldn't help himself anymore. He stepped closer to her slightly, he pushed a stray strand of hair out her face, tucking it behind her ear, and he let his hand rest on her cheek. "Steve," she breathed out quietly, and he leaned down, taking that as permission, kissing her gently. Her hand moved to the back of his neck, and for a moment the world melted away.

8. The Gate

Oh, btw, this may end up being a series since I'm going to be concluding this first bit here shortly. Just an fyi, if anyone is interested - Cat

"This is so not a full proof plan," Lucas was muttering.

"We're the distraction, Sinclair, what do you expect?" Steve pointed out, handing each person - Lucas, Mike, Max, Dustin, Jonathan, and Nancy - a makeshift weapon of some kind. They were outside the mall again, preparing for a battle in the parking lot.

"Distractions normally get killed," Lucas countered. Steve looked across the parking lot at Valerie, who was talking with El. Joyce and Hopper were by the car, preparing their own weapons.

"I hope not," Steve said, somewhat dreamily. Nancy looked over to see what he was looking at, discovering it was Valerie. She then turned back and shared a look with Jonathan, suppressing a grin.

"If you feel you need to pull back, just tell me," Valerie was telling El, putting her hand on her shoulder. "We're going to try and make sure this thing is shut down for good."

"About ready?" Hopper asking, coming up behind Valerie.

"As ready as we're gonna be," Valerie responded.

"Okay," he said. "Alright, guys!" he shouted to the other across the lot. "It's time to move!"

Hopper looking carefully around the corner, seeing about three Demodogs several feet away from where they stood. He came back around, sharing a look with Valerie and Joyce.

"I can take them out," Valerie said. "But more will come if they see El or me here." Hopper nodded, looking around at the group behind him, before looking back at Valerie again.

"So, you two make a run for the gate, and we're going to make sure they don't catch wind of you," he said.

"No guarantees though," Valerie said, peeking around the corner herself. A fourth one joined the Demodogs. She looked at El and said, "Ready, kid?" El nodded. Yes, she was nervous, she was worried her powers wouldn't work, but as long as Valerie was with her, everything should be okay. Valerie shared a look with Steve, as El did the same with Mike. No one liked the idea of separating, but they know those two needed to get to the gate and shut it down. Hopefully, for good this time. Hopper handed Valerie a walkie.

"Let's do this," Hopper signaled and the group, except for El and Valerie ran out, going after the Demodogs. Valerie grabbed El's hand and the two ran for the hallway that would lead to the depths of the mall, to the portal below the surface.

El and Valerie snuck into the now unused Russian base, making their way to where the portal was. So far, they had been undetected, and most of that probably had to do with the distractions upstairs. As they came closer to the glass that separated them from the actual open portal, they saw a handful of Demogorgens and a dozen Demodogs down near the bottom of the actual portal entrance.

"Well, so much for that being easy," Valerie huffed. She turned back to El, a plan already in her head. "I'll keep them at bay while you close that thing." El's eyes widened and she shook her head.

"I won't be able to do it," El told her.

"Remember what I said," Valerie told her, putting her hands on her shoulders. "You're never going to be able to control your emotions fully, but by masking them, you can protect yourself. And the people you care about." El licked her lips and nodded, still worried. "Come on, kid, let's knock these bastards dead." El and Valerie ventured closer to the edge, hands together at first, both putting one hand up to the portal in front of them, and they watched as it started to stitch back together.

A screech came from below them. They were finally spotted. Valerie

broke her hand away from El, who kept working on sealing the gate. Two Demogorgens started climbing up to them. Valerie knocked them back down. Their efforts doubled, and before long, she had to start cutting them apart to make sure they never got up to them. Soon, Valerie heard El screaming and she looked over at the young girl, floating. She smiled, knowing El was in control of her power again. When she turned back around, she was face to face with a Demogorgen and it knocked her back into the glass wall. She was thankful she didn't break through it, but it did crack from the force of her hit.

The Demogorgen started making it's way to El, it's head opening like an ugly flower. Valerie pulled it back towards her before cutting the ugly head off. Before long, all the Demogorgens and Demodogs died because they were finally cut off from the Upside Down. El fell down hard, completely unconscious. Valerie shoved herself towards El, checking for a pulse and being thankful that it was still strong.

"El, Val, do you read?" Hopper's voice came over the walkie that had been discarded by the windows behind them. Valerie pulled it over to her and she caught it as it slid by. "Do you copy?"

"We're here," Valerie said into the walkie.

"Are you two okay?"

"El's passed out," she said. "And I'm just... drained."

"Don't worry, we're coming for you," was the answer. Valerie sat the walkie down, completely exhausted, but still holding El in her arms, blood coming out of her nose like a sieve. She managed to stay awake until Hopper, Jonathan, and Steve got down to them. As soon as Hopper moved El, she was out just like her sister.

9. a Girl Like You

Sorry I disappeared for a bit. I live in the North East and we were dying from heatstroke here. I apologize! - Cat

Her head felt like it was splitting open and she struggled slightly, not wanting to open her eyes, worried that the world around her would be too bright. She groaned.

"Easy, Val," Steve's gentle voice urged. Hearing it, she opened her eyes only to close them hard for a second. She put her hands up to her head and groaned again. She opened her eyes once more and slowly pulled herself up to a sitting position.

"How long was I out?" she asked.

"Almost a full day," he answered, grabbing the glass of water from the stand beside the bed to hand to her. She took it and sipped it, careful not to spill it since she still felt very shaky.

"How's El?" she asked after taking a couple of sips.

"Better than you," he answered. "She was up a couple hours after we left the mall."

"To be fair though, I probably have a concussion from smashing my head against the glass," she pointed out.

"What?" he asked, worried.

"Nothing!" she squeaked out.

"I'm calling Hopper," Steve told her before standing up and going to the phone.

A light was flashed in her eyes and she was just annoyed about even being at the hospital in the first place, but Hopper had agreed with Steve: she needed to be checked out, especially if she did have a concussion.

"You definitely have a concussion," the doctor told her.

"Which I knew," she muttered under her breath, rolling her eyes, but stopped immediately when she saw the look Hopper had given her. The doctor either didn't hear her comment or completely ignored it.

"I'm going to prescribe you some pain relievers," he told her, writing down on a pad of paper, "but other than that, you should just rest. No heavy-duty lifting of any kind, young lady." Valerie nodded and took the paper the doctor was handing her. As they were leaving the hospital, they were given weird looks by a couple of different people.

"I guess we accomplished closing the gate and you coming back from the dead pretty quickly," Valerie deadpanned. He glared at her again.

One month later...

They had finished moving furniture and various boxes of different sizes into the Byers previous residence, which was now going to be the Hoppers home.

"This is so weird," Joyce said, helping Hopper open some boxes to unpack.

"It was really one of the only places available," he told her. "Since, you know, my cabin was destroyed..." She just smiled at him.

"You know, we still hadn't gone on our date yet," she said, looking away from him, pretending to dig around the box. He smiled at her now.

"What are you doing tonight?" he asked her. She looked back up at him.

Down the hall, in the room next to the living room, El, Mike, Lucas, and Max were helping to unpack El's things in her bedroom.

"This is weird, right?" Mike asked suddenly. "I mean, you just left here last year and now you're back, and so is Hopper." El just looked over at him, Lucas and Max sharing a look.

"It's a good thing," Max said, coming in for the save since she saw the somewhat hurt look on El's face. "It's just... weird," she said, not able to find a better word for it. El smiled and laughed a little.

"It is weird, but I'm happy to be back here," she told them.

Across the hall from her room, Valerie was also unpacking some things. No, she didn't have a lot, but thanks to Hopper, she now had a bed, a dresser, and a small radio. The rest, she would work on. There had been a few boxes she had permanently kept in her car, most of them including clothing. The radio was on, a *Foreigner* song had started playing. But then she came across a picture, it was of her and Dr. Brenner when she was maybe about five or six years old. *Why had she kept this?* Suddenly, there was a knock on her doorway and she dropped the picture back into the box instantly. She turned to see Steve leaning on her doorway, his hands in his pockets.

"So, I see you decided to become a permanent resident here," he said, smiling. She stood up and dusted herself off a little.

"I have," she responded, crossing her arms in front of her. He moved away from the doorway and started slowly walking her way.

"Any particular reason?" he asked coyly. She chuckled and smiled, placing her hands in her back jean pockets.

"A couple of different reasons," she told him. They looked at each other for a second.

*This heart of mine has been hurt before.
This time I want to be sure.*

And with that, he leaned down and kissed her, pulling her close as she wrapped her arms around his neck.

*I've been waiting for a girl like you to come into my life.
I've been waiting for a girl like you, your loving will survive.*

Since the door was wide open, the teenagers across the hall could hear them talking so they had come to investigate only to find Steve and Valerie making out.

*I've been waiting for someone new to make me feel alive.
Yeah, waiting for a girl like you to come into my life.*

"That's so gross," Mike said, with a disgusted face. Lucas nodded in agreement. Both El and Max smacked them on the back of the heads for the comment. Quickly, realizing they were no longer alone, Valerie and Steve pulled apart, their faces red at getting caught. El and Valerie shared a smile though.

This was home now and they were happy to be there.

10. Back To Russia

This is the last chapter for this one, guise! :) Let me know if you'd like me to continue. I have enough for at least two more stories lol

Meanwhile, in Kamchatka, Russia...

A door opens and two Russians walk up to a man wearing a suit, his hands behind his back, his gray hair slicked back out of his face. He looks at the two men standing before him.

"My ikh nashli," the one Russian says to him.

"Kuda?" the man asks, his Russian accent not as thick as the other man's.

"Hawkins," is the answer. The man nods, turning away from the two men in front of him, his face breaking out into a small smile.

"Togda davayte ikh," Dr. Brenner says.

Translations: My ikh nashli - We found them.

Kuda - Where

Togda davayte ikh - Then let's get them.

They are loose translations that I used from Google, I won't lie, but it's the best I can do since I don't honestly know Russian.